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Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7975th meeting
Friday, 16 June 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Llorentty Solíz	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mrs. Carrión

Agenda

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2017/478)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2017/478)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Mali to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/478, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali.

I now give the floor to Mr. Annadif.

Mr. Annadif (*spoke in French*): It is always an honour and a pleasure to address the Security Council as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Mali and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). This meeting takes place one year to the day after our discussions last year (see S/PV.7719) on the renewal of the MINUSMA mandate, which resulted in the adoption of resolution 2295 (2016).

Last year at the same time, we were worried and we wondered about the slow implementation of the Agreement, including the establishment of the interim authorities, the mixed patrols, the Conference for National Harmony — in short, a number of important aspects related to the interim period. Despite the regular meetings of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, there has been a distinct lack of dialogue among the signatory parties.

This meeting is being held on the eve of 20 June 2017, which is also the date of the second anniversary of the signing of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation that emanated from the Algiers process. Moreover, this meeting takes place on the eve of the end of the interim period of that Agreement, but it can be said that it is taking place against a truly calm backdrop in comparison to that of last year.

As outlined in the report of the Secretary-General before the Council (S/2017/478), the past few months have seen significant tangible progress in the implementation of the Agreement. Thanks to the good offices of the international mediation team, MINUSMA and, above all, thanks to the ongoing consultations between the Malian parties themselves around the High Representative of the President, we note — and should welcome and be pleased that — first, the Conference for National Harmony was held in satisfactory conditions, and the charter for peace, unity and national reconciliation is being developed.

Secondly, interim authorities were set up in the five regions concerned, even if the pace of their work varies from one region to another.

Thirdly, the various Operational Coordination Mechanisms and mixed patrols are on track. At this juncture, there is no longer a political deadlock, but rather considerations of a technical nature.

Fourthly, the process of security sector reform, which is a crucial part of the redesign of the Malian army, and the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are ongoing, even if the pace remains slow.

Those are positive developments and they complement the various numerous institutional and political reforms, for which the Government deserves credit. They will no doubt enable the progressive redeployment of State authority, which will yield, in a very concrete manner, peace dividends for the populations of the regions concerned.

All those positive developments are at risk of collapsing, however, due to the tensions that unfortunately persist in the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Platform coalition of armed groups, which have turned into a community-based conflict, of which civilian populations are its

main victims. The Security Council should address a stern warning to the military and political leaders of the two movements in order to put an end once and for all to the killings of the innocent and unarmed populations.

For its part, MINUSMA is sparing no effort to protect those populations. It is also using its good offices to halt this fratricidal conflict and ensure reconciliation among the protagonists, in consultation, of course, with the Malian authorities. Unfortunately, those practices play into the hands of terrorists and other extremists who are gaining ground, both in terms of their modus operandi and in the sophistication of the equipment they use. Worse, they are extending their areas of operation and influence.

As Council members are aware, for some time now, the central region has also become a source of concern. As stated in the Secretary-General's report, the Government of the Republic of Mali has adopted a multidimensional security strategy for the central regions. We commend and support this promising initiative, which is an important tool that MINUSMA, working together with the international community, intends to support in order to tackle the rampant insecurity in the centre of the country, particularly in Mopti and its surroundings.

In that spirit, MINUSMA seeks to strengthen its presence in this region as part of an integrated multidimensional approach in partnership with other important stakeholders, such as the European Union. The forthcoming deployment of the Rapid Reaction Force is part of that arrangement. More important, however, we must ensure that State authority is present and strengthened in the central region.

Resolution 2295 (2016) assigned a robust mandate to MINUSMA. Thanks to that mandate, we were able to readjust our rules of engagement, which enabled us to strengthen our patrols and pre-empt certain threats while carrying out proactive and preventive operations with a view to protecting civilian populations and United Nations personnel. The other innovation set out in resolution 2295 (2016) is the support that MINUSMA must provide to the Malian defence and security forces. While we are operating in a difficult budgetary context, it is crucial that we flesh out such support, as the ascendancy of the defence and security forces depends upon it, as does the deployment of the Malian administration.

The legitimate expectations expressed on both sides for a strengthened role for MINUSMA in the light of the changing political and security situation require us to review our priorities. For example, the strengthening of the passive and active security of MINUSMA facilities and operations on the ground needs to be seen as a sine qua non condition for the Mission to be able to deliver on its responsibilities. To do so, we are currently redoubling our mobilization efforts with contributing countries while seeking innovative partnerships and concepts with the aim of bridging operational gaps such as the shortage of armoured personnel carriers, inter alia.

In that regard, I solemnly thank the contributing countries that, during the MINUSMA force generation conference held on 22 and 23 May, pledged to deploy uniformed personnel and essential equipment to ensure security in the transfer of our units and to provide support for our operational activities. We can never emphasize enough the fact that a lack of a convoy escort battalion and a shortage of attack and transport helicopters are major handicaps.

Despite the those challenges, MINUSMA intends, first, to scale up its support for the implementation of the Agreement in accordance with the timelines and benchmarks agreed with the Government; secondly, to continue to expand its good offices role and carry out the necessary negotiations with the signatory parties involved in the implementation of the Agreement; thirdly, to support international mediation efforts and regional initiatives related to the implementation of the Agreement, such as the initiatives of the Group of Five for the Sahel; and, fourthly, to strengthen its partnership with the Malian defence and security forces with a view to building their operational capacities and ensuring their highly anticipated and sought-after redeployment throughout the country, as I mentioned earlier.

It would be advisable for the MINUSMA mandate, which the Council will consider in the days to come, to take into account those obligations, which are necessary to support Malian men and women as they seek to achieve lasting peace and stability. The men and women of MINUSMA, on whose behalf I speak today, are fully committed and will live up to the confidence that the Council has placed in them.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Annadif for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Carrión (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, for his comprehensive briefing. I would also like to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, for joining us in the Chamber today.

Uruguay recognizes the efforts of the Malian Government to make progress in the peace process. However, we are concerned about the recent violations of the ceasefire. The parties must show a real and constant will in implementing the Peace Agreement. We are also concerned about allegations of human rights violations by various actors, including the Malian armed forces, armed groups and terrorist groups. In that regard, we must emphasize the fact that respect for human rights by all parties in the conflict is indispensable to achieving lasting peace.

The humanitarian situation in Mali remains serious, as the country faces, inter alia, issues of food insecurity, lack of access to basic goods, including access to clean water and sanitation, and an increase in the number of internally displaced persons and refugees. Children remain the most vulnerable, and the closure of many schools has an impact on the future of 150,000 children who are unable to attend classes and are exposed to social conditions that result in them being recruited by terrorist groups. In the light of such a difficult situation, the funds available under the humanitarian response plan are insufficient. In addition, the increase in the number of attacks on humanitarian workers simply undermines humanitarian assistance.

Uruguay echoes the recommendations put forward at the Conference for National Harmony on the need to address issues related to governance and security, cultural diversity, inclusiveness in the political process and socioeconomic conditions, and the need to fully implement the Agreement. In that regard, we also underscore the Government's leadership role.

Threats to, and direct attacks on, Mission staff are of concern. The safety of the members of peacekeeping operations must be the focus of our attention, as that makes it possible to discharge their mandate. I would like to reiterate that attacks on Blue Helmets could amount to war crimes, and perpetrators of such attacks will be held accountable. Because it operates in a hostile environment, the Mission must be equipped with the capacity it needs to protect its personnel and to carry out its mandate. That is why we are also concerned about the current shortages of military and police personnel and of equipment. In that regard, it should be underscored that the pledges made at the force generation conference held on 22 and 23 May to mobilize support for MINUSMA must be honoured.

In conclusion, I would like to commend all MINUSMA staff, who, day after day, play a fundamental role in the country, as well as to pay tribute to those who were killed in the line of duty.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): Kazakhstan warmly welcomes His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and African Integration of the Republic of Mali to today's briefing.

We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Mr. Mahamat Annadif, for his comprehensive briefing and acknowledge him and the Mission's personnel for their commitment and service under such hazardous conditions.

We welcome the findings contained in the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/478). My delegation would like to make the following observations and recommendations.

First, Kazakhstan appreciates the efforts of the Malian Government and other signatory parties, with the support of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, in implementing the June 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We believe that the installation of interim authorities in Mali's five northern regions will lead to the restoration of Government authority in the north of the country.

While progress is noted, it is still fragile and needs to be stabilized and made irreversible. The emergence of new armed groups has undermined the peace process and spread instability from the north to the centre of the country. The pace of implementing the Agreement needs to be accelerated so that the crisis in Mali does not spill over to neighbouring countries. The Agreement will succeed only if all stakeholders collaborate and conform to the clearly formulated vision and process and realistic timelines. It is critical to lay the foundations for

stable rule of law and just, independent and accountable judicial and security institutions. It must also address the grievances of communities excluded from the peace agreement and its benefits. It is necessary to restore the confidence of Malians in State institutions, which must begin to provide essential services for all segments of the population.

Secondly, elections and constitutional referendums are part of Statebuilding and must be given full attention. The nation's aspirations for peace and stability must be supported by the African Union and the United Nations, especially in implementing the outcomes of the Conference for National Harmony and the drafting process of the charter for peace, unity and national reconciliation. The revision of the new Constitution should proceed in a robust yet inclusive and consensual manner. The international community has to come forward with funding for the elections and constitutional referendum by supporting the electoral process project managed by the United Nations Development Programme. MINUSMA's mandate should include the provision of technical assistance to reform the national and local electoral process, its mechanisms and procedures. It is equally important that ministerial nominations comply with the 30 per cent quota for the representation of women, as was stipulated on 18 December 2015.

Thirdly, cooperation with regional actors must be intensified to support Mali in overcoming its vulnerabilities and embarking upon the path to stability. The investments and efforts of the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the European Union and the Sahel countries need to be augmented considerably to strengthen border security and the capabilities of the Malian security forces, especially in the areas of training and financial and technical assistance. In order to fight the threats facing Mali, including terrorism and transnational crime, the Council should enhance partnership with the African Union and the forces of Operation Barkhane, and provide the necessary support to the Group of Five for the Sahel joint force. At the same time, there can be no durable peace without an effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, which must be adequately funded so as to reintegrate ex-combatants and prevent their relapse into violence.

Fourthly, the capabilities of MINUSMA is a key consideration in the light of its asymmetrical standards. Mali is one of the most dangerous countries for its own national forces, regional and international peacekeepers, civilians and humanitarian workers. We join others in strongly condemning the violent attacks perpetrated by terrorist groups against them. We salute them for their bravery and unsurpassed commitment, and honour those who have sacrificed their lives for the cause of peace.

In the light of the deteriorating security situation in northern and central Mali and the escalation in inter-ethnic violence, last year the Council reinforced the MINUSMA mandate, backing it with the necessary capabilities and up to 2,049 additional troops. However, the relevant provisions of resolution 2295 (2016) have not yet been implemented because of the gaps in operational capabilities, which must be bridged if the Mission is to effectively fulfil its mandate. We also need more deterrence and predeployment preparedness of contingents. At the same time, more predictable military assets are necessary. We therefore welcome commitments from troop- and police-contributing countries to address current gaps made at the force generation conference held in New York last month.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Bolivia commends and thanks the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, for his briefing on the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2017/478). I would also like to warmly welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and African Integration of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, to today's meeting.

Bolivia commends the efforts made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to promote lasting peace and security in this brotherly country. We also laud commend the cooperation among countries that contribute to MINUSMA by sending military and police contingents. We thank the staff of peacekeeping operations, who risk their lives, and we pay tribute to those who have died in the line of duty.

We are concerned about MINUSMA's lack of capacity and resources, which are required to enable it to effectively and efficiently carry out its mandate in a volatile and complex environment with asymmetrical threats that threaten the political peace process, the

members of the Mission and Mali's civilian population. We recognize that the challenges that MINUSMA is facing have evolved since it first deployed, in 2013. It is dealing not only with violence from armed groups but with increasing threats from terrorist groups. According to the Secretary-General's latest report, since June 2016 there have been 105 attacks by violent extremists and terrorists on the Malian defence and security forces, 76 on MINUSMA and 20 on French forces. It reports that during the same period, eight peacekeepers and 131 members of the Malian forces have been killed, and 176 injured, in attacks. The numbers of asymmetric attacks have grown and involve increasingly sophisticated and complex methods of war, such as improvised explosive devices, anti-personnel mines, mortars and rockets, showing that MINUSMA needs to adjust if it is to deal with such difficult challenges. Furthermore, the humanitarian situation in the central and northern regions of Mali has continued to deteriorate, with 3.8 million people at risk of food insecurity owing to the drought and the constant violence. Around 1.2 million people have been identified as having limited access to water and basic services, and the number of people who are internally displaced owing to insecurity has increased from approximately 45,800 to about 59,000 persons.

Two years after the signing of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, we acknowledge the progress that has been made in the work of building stability through an inclusive political dialogue. The Conference for National Harmony, held in Bamako between 27 March and 2 April, was a clear example of that, bringing together more than 1,000 representatives of civil society, including women and young people, as well as of political parties and armed groups.

We appreciate all the Government of Mali's efforts to take steps to stabilize the country, such as encouraging former combatants to join the national armed forces, designating interim administrations where the State presence is weak, appointing a new Prime Minister, creating a new and more inclusive cabinet, some of whose members are women, and updating the electoral rolls for as part of the preparations for future presidential, district, regional and legislative elections. Such efforts are consonant with the commendable initiatives undertaken by regional organizations under the leadership of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union.

Among those, we would like to highlight the strategic concept of operations for the joint force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), which in accordance with the Nouakchott Process will be deploying a joint force with the goal of tackling the effects of terrorism and transnational organized crime along border areas with full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the countries in the G-5 Sahel. We believe that the Security Council should cooperate actively not only with MINUSMA but with all regional and subregional initiatives aimed at helping to stabilize Mali, by encouraging all the parties' compliance with the agreements through mediation, preventive diplomacy and similar measures recognized by the Charter of the United Nations.

In conclusion, we encourage the parties involved, and the international community as a whole, to continue to give technical support and economic and humanitarian cooperation aimed at arriving at a definitive peace in Mali through a process of disarmament, dialogue, reconciliation and reintegration.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and African Integration of Mali.

Mr. Diop (Mali) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the Plurinational State of Bolivia's stewardship of the Security Council for the month of June, as well as to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for Uruguay's admirable work in the previous month. I would also like to reiterate the deep gratitude of the people and the Government of Mali to the Security Council, the Secretary-General, the countries and organizations on the Agreement Monitoring Committee, led by Algeria, the countries contributing troops to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and France's Operation Barkhane for the invaluable and continuing efforts and sacrifices they have made to bring peace and stability to my country.

I would also like to reiterate here the tribute that the people and the Government of Mali have paid to the memory of all the victims of the crisis in our country — civilian and military, foreign and Malian — who have fallen on the field of honour, and with a special thought for MINUSMA's Guinean

contingent, members of which were the most recent victims of these atrocities only a few days ago. We offer the wounded our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

The delegation of Mali takes note of the current report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/478) and would like to thank our brother Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Mali and Head of MINUSMA, for his briefing and for the excellent work he is doing on our behalf.

It has been almost two years since the Algeria process saw the signing of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, and as that period comes to an end, I welcome Secretary-General António Guterres's recognition of the leadership and personal commitment of His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President and Head of State of the Republic of Mali, to the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Mali has come a long way, and under the President's leadership the Government has worked extremely hard to achieve the significant progress that has been made, with the cooperation of all the signatories and the support of our bilateral and multilateral partners, needless to say.

I will omit the long list of measures and concrete actions taken by the Government of Mali in the context of implementing the Peace Agreement, of which I think the Council is well aware, partly thanks to the Secretary-General's coverage of those developments in the report. In the past few months, as shown in the report's annex on the benchmarks for monitoring the implementation of the Agreement, approved by the Government and MINUSMA on 28 May, major progress has been made on the peace process. As of today, interim authorities and temporary colleges are functioning in five regions in the North with the exception of Kidal, where technical difficulties continue. With regard to the mixed patrols, the Government of Mali, despite its limited resources, is working to fully operationalize the Operational Coordination Mechanism. It is also providing various types of logistical support to the planned battalions, including health services and even death grants for victims' families. The Government therefore took the opportunity to hold the 18th meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee in Bamako on 5 June in order to brief its partners on the technical and logistical aspects of operationalizing the Mechanism in Kidal as soon as possible.

With regard to the follow-up to the recommendations of the Conference for National Harmony, as you emphasized just now, Mr. President, which took place from 27 March to 2 April, I am pleased to inform the Council that the preliminary drafts of the Charter for Peace, Unity and National Reconciliation and the map of Mali's territory have been finalized by the Special Commission established for the purpose.

With regard to the process of reviewing the Constitution, I am pleased to inform the Council that the National Assembly of Mali, following several days of intensive, constructive debate, on 2 June adopted the bill on that issue submitted by the Government. The text that was adopted includes several major innovations that bolster Malian democracy and take into account the relevant provisions of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, in particular with regard to the creation of a second parliamentary chamber, the senate. The bill will be put to a referendum on 9 July. The Government will make every effort to ensure that the referendum is held under the best possible conditions.

The Government is also working to provide basic social services to the people and to relaunch the local economy where security conditions so allow.

Concerning the prospects for the implementation of the Agreement, I can assure the Council that beyond 20 June, the second anniversary of the signing of the Agreement, the interim authorities will continue to work on the organization of the referendum and of local and regional elections, in accordance with the timetable established by the Government. The Government will also continue its efforts in the framework of the process of cantonment and disarmament; demobilization and reintegration (DDR) efforts; reform of the security sector; the effective operationalization of joint patrols; and the provision of peace dividends to the populations affected by the crisis.

We can therefore affirm that the peace process in Mali is on a positive path as a result of the gradual return of confidence among all Malian stakeholders. However, these still-fragile achievements must not lose make us sight of the multiple and very real challenges facing the peace process in Mali. These challenges include the insecurity resulting from the activities of terrorist groups and issues related to the mobilization of financial resources for the effective and comprehensive implementation of the Agreement.

In this regard, I reiterate the Malian Government's call on all partners to meet the commitments they have made in support of the peace and development process in Mali. In terms of the challenges facing the country, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General mentioned the persistent tensions between the signatory movements, the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Platform coalition of armed groups, which are creating conditions that are not conducive to the harmonious implementation of the Agreement. The Government is not being passive in this respect; the high representative of the President of the Republic is deploying his good offices in an attempt find common ground and ease tensions on the ground, with the support of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

One year after the adoption of resolution 2295 (2016), of 29 June 2016, which calls on MINUSMA to adopt a more proactive stance and gives it a robust mandate, we cannot but note that the major innovations contained in the resolution have not yet been translated into facts on the ground. Despite the improvements that have been noted on the ground, as a whole the MINUSMA posture has remained fairly static and defensive, which has facilitated freedom of movement for terrorist and extremist groups. They have made the most of this in order to better organize themselves and multiply attacks against the civilian population, the Malian defence and security forces and foreign forces.

It is important, in considering the renewal of MINUSMA's mandate, for the capacity of the Mission to mobilize to be strengthened and for patrols to be intensified. It is also important for the Mission, as we stated repeatedly and as everyone agrees, to be provided with the material, financial and human resources necessary to strengthen its operational capacity so as to enable it fully and effectively to discharge its mandate.

The conclusions of the MINUSMA force-generation conference held here on 22 and 23 May, and here we wish to commend the Secretary-General, allow us to have hope. I should like also to welcome the pledges of contributions made by several countries, and I hope that these pledges will materialize as quickly as possible.

It is equally important to strengthen the indispensable cooperation between MINUSMA and the Malian defence and security forces. This is a key to success and the prospects of emerging from the crisis. In particular, on behalf of the Government of Mali, I would like to emphasize the necessity and urgency of supporting the Malian defence and security forces in their daily fight against terrorism on the ground, without waiting for the conclusion of the process of their reconstitution and with the necessary logistics, as has been done elsewhere.

The Government of Mali would also like to see the issue of the return of the Administration and of the defence and security forces to Kidal at the core of the new mandate of MINUSMA, as well as the effectiveness of the processes of cantonment, DDR and security-sector reform.

The security situation in Mali and in the Sahel continues to deteriorate in a worrisome manner. The situation is marked by the persistence and proliferation of terrorist attacks, which constitute the main obstacle to the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

Faced with this situation, the Heads of State of the States members of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) decided on 6 February last to create a joint force to fight terrorism, transnational organized crime and trafficking in human beings. The creation of this force is the fruit of the common will of the leaders of our subregion to work jointly and pool their means in order to respond to cross-border challenges, inter alia.

On behalf of the States members of the G-5 Sahel, I should like to express the deep concerns of President of Mali, Acting Chairman of the G-5 Sahel, concerning the difficulties that the Security Council is encountering in adopting a draft resolution on the immediate deployment of the joint force, news of which had given rise to a great deal of hope among the peoples of the Sahel region. The adoption of such a draft would send a strong and unequivocal signal from the international community to terrorist groups and traffickers of all kinds and make clear its unanimous support for the efforts of the region, which is facing a situation that, as we all are aware, threatens international peace and security and therefore falls wthin the purview of the Security Council.

It should be recalled that the creation of the concept of operations of the force took place in the framework of a participatory process involving all our regional and international partners in the area of security. We have also planned operational coordination mechanisms for the interventions of all forces present in the region. I can assure the Council that the operations of the joint

force will respect gender, as was recalled earlier, and human rights and will promote humanitarian access to populations in need.

As of now, General Didier Dacko has been appointed Commander of the G-5 Sahel joint force and is working to establish its headquarters. We are awaiting only authorization in the form of a Security Council resolution for its operationalization.

Here with me today is Mr. Mohamed Najim, Permanent Secretary of the G-5 Sahel, who travelled here to New York with us in order to help bring this important regional initiative, in which the Security Council is to participate, to fruition.

With regard to the human rights situation mentioned in the report under consideration, the Government of Mali notes that the Mali defence and security forces have, unfortunately, been accused of alleged human rights violations, in a context of counter-terrorism efforts and asymmetric attacks involving the civilian population.

In this regard, I would point out that the majority of the violations documented and attributed to the Malian defence and security forces were committed in areas where judicial and investigative services are absent owing to insecurity. We also have a different approach to identifying human rights abuses, as determined by the Human Rights Division of MINUSMA. Quite often, victims or civil parties do not file a complaint, and there is a lack of corroborating testimony and investigative units in the areas where such violations have been committed. Therefore, despite the goodwill of the Government, prevailing conditions make legal prosecution of those cases difficult.

Nevertheless, the Chief of the General Staff of the armed forces of Mali has an international humanitarian law and human rights division that is willing to collaborate with the Human Rights Division of MINUSMA. In any event, Council members may rest assured that all reported or documented cases of violations are systematically investigated and, where appropriate, punished, in accordance with existing law. Mali, which has ratified virtually all international human rights legal instruments, remains fully committed to defending and promoting human rights.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the commitment of the Government of Mali and the President of the Republic to continuing and expediting the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, negotiated in Algiers. I call, on the one hand, for strengthening the capacity and capabilities of MINUSMA to enable it to carry out its mission effectively and, on the other, for enhanced cooperation between MINUSMA and the Malian defence and security forces in order to help Mali restore authority throughout its territory, which is critical to the sustainable security and stability of our country.

I call on the Security Council to adopt, without delay, the resolution authorizing the deployment of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) joint force in order to help protect our populations and our common space from the dangers of terrorism and thus, protect the rest of the world from a real threat to regional and international peace and security. I would also like to note that peace in Mali and stability in the Sahel must be considered in a comprehensive manner by the Security Council, in the context of an overall package that rests upon four mutually reinforcing key pillars that will ensure the effectiveness and success of our joint efforts.

The first pillar continues to be the resolve of the Government of Mali to accelerate the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali in the framework of the political process agreed to and supported by the international community. The second pillar is the stabilization of MINUSMA in the context of a strengthened mandate. The third pillar is the support of the French Operation Barkhane in the fight against terrorism. The fourth pillar is the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel joint force to manage the regional dimension of the crisis.

It is essential that the Security Council simultaneously take action on those four mutually reinforcing pillars. We must consider those four aspects together in the framework of a sustainable response if we are to have a lasting impact.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.